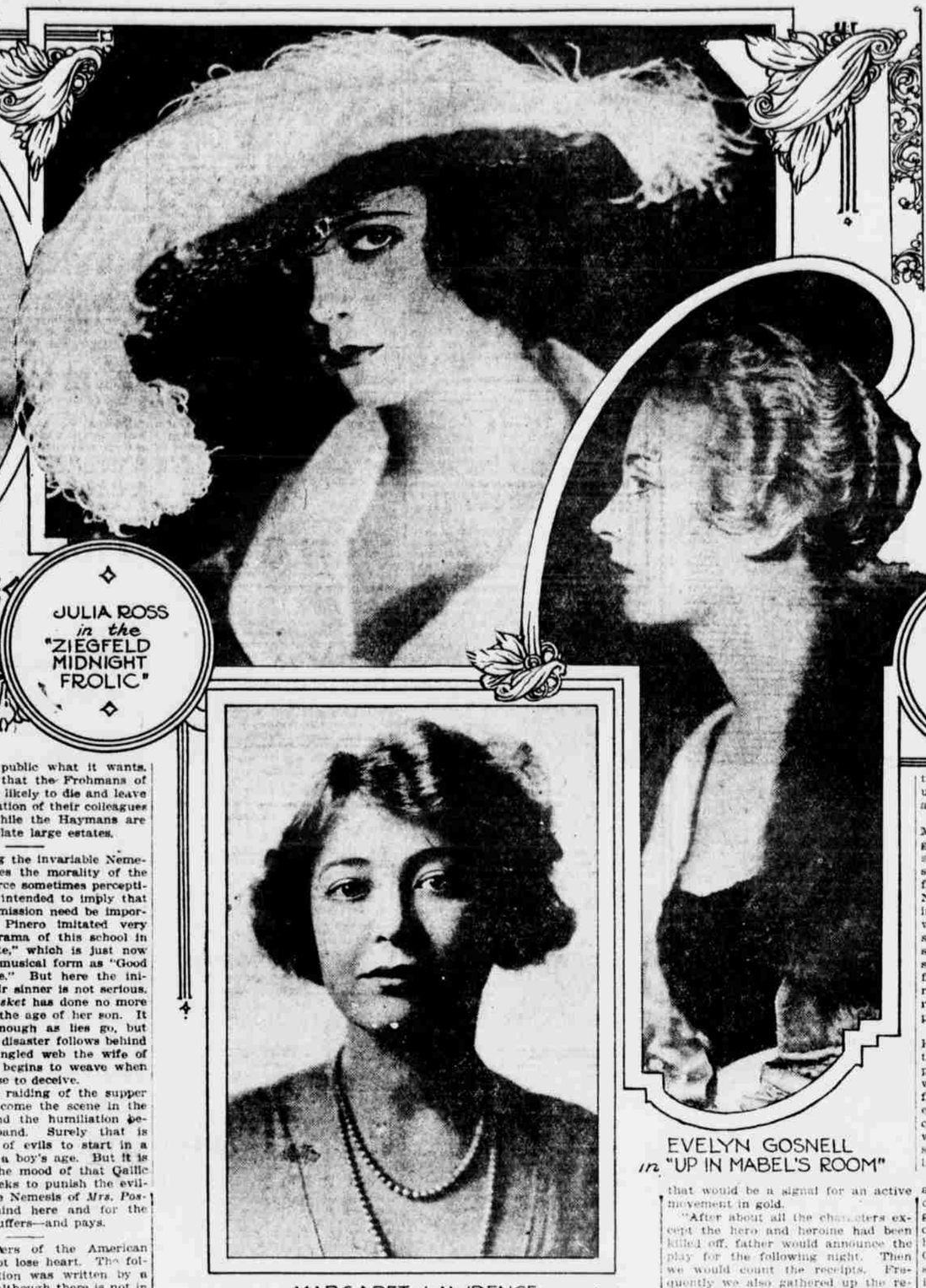
Faces Seen Behind the Footlights

PEGGY HOPKINS *in* "A SLEEPLESS NIGHT"



JULIA ROSS *in the* "ZIEGFELD MIDNIGHT FROLIC"

MOLLIE KING *in* "GOOD MORNING JUDGE"

MARGARET LAWRENCE *in* "TEA FOR THREE"

EVELYN GOSNELL *in* "UP IN MABEL'S ROOM"

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

EVIDENTLY the "modern" manner as it is represented, let us say by Mr. Hopkikns, does not go out of its way to be of aid to the playwright. What he has done must be in itself capable of the same suggestion that so easily, yet so profoundly impresses the connoisseurs of the drama. They are notoriously impatient of the banal. To be banal is in their interpretation of stage practice to be theatrical, explicit, illusory and highly colored. There could be no more illustrative example of this habit than the first act of "The Fortune Teller," which is the latest specimen of what Mr. Hopkins does in the matter of production, to come before the public.

This opening division of the drama takes place in a tent which may be part of a small show or the sideshow of a circus. A fortune teller sits in the room plying her fraudulent trade. About her hang the canvas walls and over her head a lamp which concentrates all of the light in the room on her. This is an admired principle of the modern manner —a circle of light in the centre of the room to which the characters advance when they are important in the action and from which they retire when their participation in it is finished. This is mechanical and serves, however, the enigmatical purpose of keeping half the characters in the dark during most of the play. But there is no consideration in the modern manner for any such old fashioned prejudice as a desire to see the stage.

Miss Rambeau, frowsy and garrulous in her spangled black gowns, tells her hocus pocus to the victims that wonder, and occasionally there is the appearance of a man in tights or a woman in spangles to indicate that the background of this scene is a circus. Where are the music and the ballyhoo, the suggestion of specious gayety, the *va-et-vient* which would inevitably be the atmosphere of such a place? It might be the morgue for all that inevitable attempt at liveliness and animation which would be made by the proprietor of such a place. But there is gloom, and usually there is silence. The other men and women in the first act of "The Fortune Teller" slink in and out with no regard to the effect of their actions on the play, which was supposed to be one of the old principles of "production."

But evidently the modern manner aims to abolish all such useless conventions. It is perhaps seen at its best in the gloomy first scene of "Barbara," with its sense of portent that led the audience to believe that a corpse was under the table or soon would be there; in the deserted emptiness of the second act of "The Gypsy Train," or in the cold detachment of certain episodes in "Redemption." This way of treating a play may be of the highest artistic importance, and it may tickle to death the elect who are capable of delighting only in the delicate suggestion of a scene and are far above the necessity for any emphasis of its meaning. Yet it ignores the taste of the public which seeks the sense of illusion and beauty in the theatre. It does, moreover, precious little for the playwright, who in place of the enrichment and improvement to his text which another manner of treatment might give finds himself compelled to depend wholly on his own work in the drab projection of it that is thrown to the public.

The discrepancy between the estate left by the late Charles Frohman and his business associate, Al Hayman, is eloquent of certain conditions that exist in the theatre. They may not be closely related to its art, but there is an undeniable light from them on certain conditions, such as the great increase in the number of playhouses. Mr. Froham, it must be borne in mind, was a producer. Mr. Hayman, on the other hand, was active chiefly in the theatre as an owner of theatres.

The man in Mr. Frohman's position has, of course, the task of pleasing the public. How difficult that is the career of every manager has shown. Once there may come a success which will compensate for a number of failures, both financially and in the amour propre of the impresario. It is the ever cheering search for these lucky turns that so often comes to resemble the triumph of hope over experience. It has rarely happened that success comes often enough to leave the manager at the end of his career as rich as the man who has confined his interest in the drama as a business to the ownership of theatres.

They can always be rented. Just now there is the same cry from London that is heard in New York. Managers have prepared so many plays for production that no stages can be found for them. Fortunate owners of theatres can always find tenants, and usually on their own terms. And the tenant must pay. So whether the play is a success or not the owner of the theatre earns his compensation. He is not dependent on the favor of the public. That the manager is seeking. It is only the lucky landlord who is independent of the necessity of giving the public what it wants. So it happens that the Frohmans of the theatre are likely to die and leave only the admiration of their colleagues behind them while the Haymans are able to accumulate large estates.

In mentioning the invariable Nemesis which makes the morality of the best French farce sometimes perceptible it was not intended to imply that the sin of commission need be important. Arthur Pinero imitated very skilfully the drama of this school in "The Magistrate," which is just now on view in its musical form as "Good Morning, Judge." But here the iniquity of the fair sinner is not serious. Indeed *Mrs. Posket* has done no more than lie about the age of her son. It seems white enough as lies go, but what a trail of disaster follows behind it. What a tangled web the wife of the Magistrate begins to weave when she first practise to deceive.

There is the raiding of the supper club and then come the scene in the police court and the humiliation before her husband. Surely that is string enough of evils to start in a little lie about a boy's age. But it is inevitably in the mood of that Gallic farce which seeks to punish the evildoer. Even the Nemesis of *Mrs. Posket* stalks behind here and for the white lie she suffers—and pays.

Loyal admirers of the American theatre need not lose heart. The following description was written by a London critic, although there is not in its despondency a note which might not readily be transferred to our own theatre:

"Never in the history of the theatre has there been so little interest in the drama or so much in entertainment. The cause cannot be that the theatre has become a commercial enterprise, as it has against an enterprise in a form of art; it must be that the public in seeking relaxation does not very much care how it is relaxed.

"Some new school of drama must be forming, because these new, vast audiences who have acquired the theatre habit cannot for long live entirely on confectionery. They must in time tire of the silk stocking school and demand sterner stuff, not necessarily of the highbrow order, but possibly of the romantic, the adventurous, the brave.

"In much the same way the kinema theatres are full. Nobody seems to mind what films are being shown, nobody seems to care if they are good or bad, they just go to the pictures. And yet underlying it all the kinema world is awake to the idea that a demand will arise for better work, more careful production, more artistic sympathy."

AFTER FIVE YEARS.

WHEN Georgia Caine quit the stage five years ago her many friends and admirers believed that musical comedy had lost one of its brightest lights for good and all. Miss Caine, too, thought that she was through with professional life. She returned at the height of her popularity, at the close of the engagement of "Adele" at the Longacre Theatre. Previously she had been the leading woman in "The Merry Widow," "The Earl and the Girl," "The Rich Mr. Hoggenheimer" and other successful musical plays of the day.

But Miss Caine has heard the call of the footlights and has returned to Broadway to play one of the leading roles in "Oh, My Dear!" this season's musical comedy at the Princess Theatre. The public had not forgotten Miss Caine during her five years absence. Her first entrance at the opening performance was the occasion for an ovation, spontaneous, but genuine and sincere.

It is not surprising that the actress has returned to her profession. She comes of a theatrical family. Nearly all her life has been spent on the stage and she is rather proud of her earlier experiences, had mostly in Arizona, Nevada and California.

"My father was a versatile man," she says. "Besides knowing how to adapt plays and himself to circumstances, he knew how to repair harness and could play the villains in mining camp melodramas without being called upon to appear to members of a box party before, during or after the performance.

"We had a travelling wagon show. The wagon was red—but that is not important. Father was leading man. Mother was leading woman. My brother was leading horses. I was but a child, leading the simple life except when occasion demanded that the little daughter of the sturdy but struggling settler be captured by bloodthirsty Indians. Then I would be borne away on a bronco to the fastness of the mountains, and in a few weeks the gallant cowboys would gallop up the face of the precipipe and rout the hated Sioux or Comanches. If the going was good I'd be rescued just before dusk and restored to my heartbroken parents in time to help take down the lighter scenery and enjoy a plate of beans.

"Sometimes we played in an opera house—that was when the town boasted of one. In other places, where there was less civic pride and more saloons, we either built a theatre suited to our productions or played in the vacant lots.

"Naturally receipts fluctuated. We depended less on the price of admissions than on the degree of popular enthusiasm of the audiences. In the big battle between the gallant cowboys and the hated redskins, if every redskin bit a good big slice of dust and the cowboy victory was spectacular, mussy and complete, the boys out in front would let out a whoop and their belts and the gold dust would begin sifting h across the footlights and filling the cracks in the stage. Now and then a regular first nighter would curve a few loose nuggets at me, and that would be a signal for an active movement in gold.

"After about all the characters except the hero and heroine had been killed off, father would announce the play for the following night. Then we would count the receipts. Frequently we also gathered up the receipts on the stage with a whisk broom and a shovel.

"And so I entered my stage career. After I had been carried shrieking from the little cabin of my poor but pioneer parents and borne away to the rendezvous of the outlaw band a few hundred times, the company's repertoire was broadened, and at fourteen I actually had appeared in 'Macbeth' and 'Nan, the Good For Nothing,' showing that I had range to my talents. Then, after a time, I came to New York. Ben Teal put me in 'Lost, Strayed or Stolen.' Then I got in musical comedy and I've been there ever since. So, you see, I simply had to return to the stage when Mr. Comstock and Mr. Elliott wanted me for 'Oh, My Dear!'"

A STAGE DREAM.

If ever you doubt that dreams do come true you have but to meet *Bobette* in "Daddies" in the Lyceum Theatre to have your faith restored. For Edith King's brief history in the theatre is very much like finding the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Her dream of the stage had its inception a few years ago in the Pennsylvania hills in a little town near Wilkesbarre. Until Miss King was 16 years of age she had never seen a play, never been inside a theatre. With her first visit to a playhouse ambition was born. Some still, small voice within whispered to the dark eyed girl that she could succeed if she could secure the chance to try, and with the courage born of utter ignorance she determined to seek a theatrical engagement in New York.

Knowing nothing of the big city Miss King stepped off the train one glorious morning and took a taxi straight to the Belasco Theatre, where she succeeded in getting a hearing from Mr. Belasco's stage manager. Now it just so happened that the casting for "Marie-Odile" was well under way. The company had been largely selected, but there yet remained the securing of several players to impersonate the nuns. The difficulty lay in finding actresses who gave just the right contrast to Miss Starr in the title role and who yet had that beautiful poise required for the sisters.

The brunette loveliness of Miss King, her gentleness of manner and the softness of her voice won her a place in the "Marie-Odile" company, where experience might utterly have failed to do so. She was instantly engaged, and this began her stage career under Mr. Belasco's direction, where she still remains, although with several flights to other managerial banners.

Following "Marie-Odile" Miss King appeared in Mr. Belasco's production of "The Boomerang," after which she gained Mr. Belasco's permission to accept an offer from Arthur Hopkins for his Chicago company playing "Good Gracious, Annabelle!" Last season she was seen only in New York, first in the Selwyn production of "The Pipes of Pan," in which she essayed the role of the artist's model, a part in which she attracted considerable attention. Miss King's second experience of the season of 1917-18 was with Lou-Tellegen in "Blind Youth," in which she played the ingenue lead, after which she returned gratefully to Mr. Belasco for the portrayal of the lovely young sister of the hero of "Daddies."

This fragment of stage history is remarkable for two reasons: first that it began under the direction of David Belasco without preliminary experience, and second, for Miss King's freedom from the average player's enforced idleness between plays. If her beginning was spectacular the fact that she has never since wanted for an engagement is no less so.

THAT PURPLE LIGHT.

The effect of the mysterious light that glows in "The Unknown Purple" overthrew many stage conventions as to color and light. For instance, to neutralize the effect of the purple rays Richard Bennett is compelled to wear a green wig in order to get the appearance of a white haired man. Helen MacKellar spent many anxious hours in studying the proper makeup that would elude the purple shadows and neutralize the violet rays. And for her costumes, it was necessary to instal a miniature lighting apparatus under whose purple lights all material might be tested before it was made into a costume to be worn in the play.

First samples of materials and even bolts of velvet and satin were assembled at the costumer's who had the making of costumes for Miss MacKellar. It was found that blue lost its identity under the purple light and since the first act, the home of the Dawsons, has for its setting a drawing room with blue portieres and blue upholstered chairs, a blue velvet gown would have been completely submerged in the purple blue shadows. That the blue background should fade under the battery of light was desirable, but it was necessary that Miss MacKellar stand out. Gray also became dim and insignificant under this light and was eliminated for the color scheme.

Eventually Miss MacKellar found that a vivid emerald green held its color, no matter how strong the violet rays. Also black was so dense that it threw off the purple light and stood forth unshadowed by the illumination. And in the last act, Miss MacKellar uses the third color that blends but does not lose its identity when bathed in the purple glow—an amethyst velvet.

After colors had been tested and satisfactorily decided upon the next problem was that of makeup. Miss MacKellar had to unlearn all she knew of the art and begin afresh.

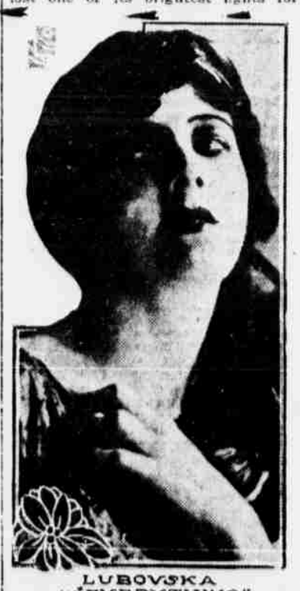
"The first thing I did," said Miss MacKellar, "was to have purple lights installed in my dressing room. Both Mr. Bennett and myself have to make up under a light as near to the purple glow as we can get in a single light. For the unknown purple has a disastrous effect on the pink and white makeup we generally use."

First of all it was found that flesh colored powder could not be used; it was necessary to use mauve powder, which, by the way, had to be made expressly for Miss MacKellar. Yellow powder had to be substituted also. Instead of a blue pencil for the eyes a purple crayon is used. Her handkerchief is lavender tinted; in fact, everything that is scheduled to come in contact with the purple rays must be of some shade of purple or of some color that when tested shows itself proof against the insidious power of the unknown purple.

So successful has been the production at the Theatre du Vieux Colombier of "La Veine," by Alfred Capus, that Director Copeau has decided to continue the play for a second week. Patrons of the French theatre are eager to hear the modern comedies, and this play so delightfully acted has been a great success.

LUCY COTTON *in* "UP IN MABEL'S ROOM"

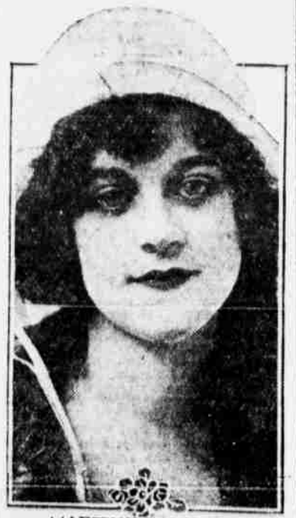
BERTHA KALICH *in* "THE RIDDLE: WOMAN"



LUBOVSKA *in* "EVERYTHING" *at the* HIPPODROME

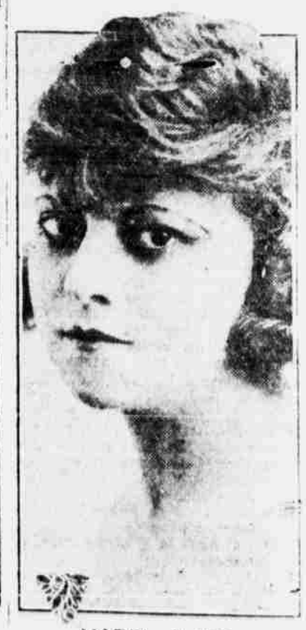
MARGARET MOWER *in* STUART WALKER'S PORTMANTEAU.

MOLLY PEARSON *in* "PENNY WISE"



MARTINE BURNLEY *in* "THE CANARY"

JANE GREY *in* "THE MARQUIS DE PRIOLA"



MABEL ALLEN *in* "MONTE CRISTO, JR."